

INDIVIDUAL SIN LAID ON JESUS NO. 925

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 10, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”
Isaiah 53:6.*

I THINK I addressed you from this text four years ago—(See #694, Volume 12—SIN LAID ON JESUS—by the grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and more than 574 Spanish translations, visit: www.spurgeongems.org), but I feel quite safe in returning to it, for we shall never exhaust it. It is a verse so wealthy in meaning that if I had during the whole four years preached upon it every Sunday, it would be my fault if the theme were stale. On this occasion I desire mainly to draw attention to a part of the text upon which little was said on the former occasion; the vine is the same, but we shall gather clusters from a bough ungleaned before; the jewels are the same, but we will place them in another light, and view them from another angle. May God grant that some who derived no comfort from our former words may be led to find peace and salvation in Christ this morning; the Lord in His infinite mercy grant it may be so.

I shall first give a *general exposition of the text*; then in the second place I shall *dwell upon the special doctrine which I wish to teach*; and then, thirdly, we shall draw from that special doctrine a *special lesson*.

I. First, we will GIVE A GENERAL EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT. “All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

The text naturally breaks itself up into these three heads; *a confession general to all penitents*—“All we like sheep have gone astray”; *a personal confession peculiar to each one*, “We have turned, every one to his own way”; and then, *the august doctrine of substitution*, which is the very soul and spirit of the entire gospel, “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

Our exposition, then, begins with *the confession which is universal to all penitents*—it is acknowledged here by the persons speaking who call themselves “all we”; that they all had, like sheep, broken the hedge of God’s law, forsaken their good and ever blessed Shepherd, and wandered into paths perilous and deadly. A comparison is here used, and its use shows that the confession was a thoughtful one, and not a matter of careless form. Man is here compared to a beast, for sin brings out the animal part of us, and while holiness allies us to angels, sin degrades us to brutes; and we are not likened to one of the more noble and intelligent animals, but to a silly sheep. All sin is folly; all sinners are fools; sheep are dishonored by the comparison here used, for with all their silliness, they have never been known to rush into the fire after having felt the flame. You will observe that the creature selected for comparison is one that cannot live without care and attention; there is no such thing as a wild sheep; there could not long be sheep unless they were tended and cared for by a shepherd. The creature’s happiness, its safety, and very existence all depend upon its being under a nurture and care far above its own; yet for all that, the sheep strays from the shepherd. Man’s happiness lies in being under the direction of the Lord, in being obedient to God, in being in communion with God; departure from God is death to all his highest interests, destruction to all his best prospects; yet for all that, as the sheep goes astray, even so does man!

The sheep is a creature exceedingly quick-witted upon the one matter of going astray; if there is but one gap in the hedge, the sheep will find it; if there is but one possibility out of 500 that by any means the flock shall wander, one of the flock will be quite certain to discover that possibility; and all its companions will avail themselves of it! So is it with man. He is quick of understanding for evil things; God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions—the inventions being all to destroy his own uprightness, and to do despite to the law of God. But that very creature which is so quick-witted to wan-

der is the least likely of all animals to return. The ox knows its owner, and the ass knows its master's crib; even the swine that will wander by day, will return to the trough by night, and the dog will scent out his master over many a mile, but not so the sheep. Sharp as it is to discover opportunities for going astray, it seems to be bereft of all wit or will to come back to the fold. And such is man—wise to do evil, but foolish towards that which is good. With a hundred eyes, like Argus, he searches out opportunities for sinning; but, like Bartimeus, he is stone blind as to repentance and a return to God.

The sheep goes astray, it is said, all the more frequently when it is most dangerous for it to do so; propensities to stray seem to be developed in the very proportion in which they ought to be subdued. Whereas in our own land a sheep might wander with some safety, it wanders less in the Oriental plains, where for it to go astray is to run risks from leopards and wolves. Those very men who ought to be most careful, and who are placed in positions where it is best for them to be scrupulous, are those who are most prone to follow after evil, and with heedless carelessness to leave the way of truth.

The sheep goes astray ungratefully. It owes everything to the shepherd, and yet forsakes the hand that feeds it, and heals its diseases; the sheep goes astray repeatedly. If restored today it may not stray today if it cannot, but it will tomorrow if it can. The sheep wanders further and further, from bad to worse; it is not content with the distance it has reached, it will go yet greater lengths; there is no limit to its wandering except its weakness. Do you not see you own selves, my brothers and sisters, as in a mirror? From Him that has blessed you, you have gone astray; to Him you owe your all, and yet from Him you continually depart; your sins are not occasional—they are constant! Your wanderings are not slight, but you wander further and further; and were it not for restraining grace which has prevented your footsteps you would have wandered even now to the utmost extremities of guilt, and utterly destroyed your souls.

“All we like sheep have gone astray.” What? Is there not *one* faithful soul? Alas, no! “There is none that does good, no, not one.” Search the ranks of the blessed in heaven, and there is not one saint before the throne who will boast that when on earth he never sinned; search the church of God below and there is not one, however closely he walks with God, but must confess that he has erred and strayed from God's ways like a lost sheep. Vain is the man who refuses to confess this, for his hypocrisy or his pride, whichever may be the cause of such a base lie proves that he is not one of God's chosen. The chosen of God unanimously, mournfully, but heartily take up this cry, “All we like sheep have gone astray.” A general confession, then, is uttered in our text.

This confession by the mass is backed up by a *personal acknowledgment* from each one, “We have turned every one to his own way.” Sin is general but yet special; all are sinners, but each one is a sinner with an emphasis; no man has of himself turned to God's way, but in every case each one has chosen “his own way.” The very gist of sin lies in our setting up our own way in opposition to the way and will of God. We have all done so; we have all aspired to be our own masters; we have all desired to follow our own inclinations, and have not submitted ourselves to the will of God. The text implies that each man has his own peculiarity and special sin; all are diseased, but not all precisely with the same form of disease. It is well, my brothers and sisters, if each of us, in examining ourself, has found out what is his own peculiar transgression; it is well to know what evil weeds flourish most readily in the soil of our heart; what wild beast that is most native to the forests of our soul. Many have felt that their peculiar sin was so remarkably evil, and so surpassingly vile that it separated them altogether from the common rank of sinners; they felt that their iniquities were unique, and like lone peaks, lifted themselves defiantly towards the pure heavens of God provoking the fiercest thunderbolts of His wrath. Such persons have almost been driven to despair under the belief that they were peculiarly great sinners, as Paul puts it, the very chief of sinners. I should not wonder if this feeling which each one imagines to be peculiar to himself may have come over very many of us, and the shadow of despair may for a while have fallen upon very many of us, for it is no unusual thing for an awakened conscience to feel its own sinfulness to be above measure and parallel, the worst that has ever defiled mankind.

As this special sin happens to be the point to which I desire to call to your attention, as I wish to show that the atoning sacrifice of Christ not only applies to sin in general, since “all we like sheep have gone astray,” but applies to special sin, for “we have turned, every one to his own way”—I pass over it

slightly now, and introduce you further in the exposition of the text, to what I called *the august doctrine of the substitution of Christ*, “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

We have seen the confession of sin made by the mass, we lightly touched the peculiar confession made by each awakened individual, put all these together and you see a mass of sin—did I say you see it? It is a mass of sin too great to be beheld by the human understanding, an enormous load of iniquity against God. What is to be done with the offenders? The only thing that can be done with them, in the ordinary rule of justice, is to punish them for their offenses; and that punishment must be such as was threatened—indignation, wrath, destruction, death. That God should punish sin is not a matter of impulse with Him; it was not with Him an alternative as to whether He might or might not punish sin. We speak always with holy awe when we speak of anything concerning Him, but with reverence we say it was not possible that God should wink at the iniquity of man; it was not possible that He should treat it with indifference. His attribute of justice, which is as undoubtedly a part of His glory as His attribute of love, required that sin should be punished; moreover, as God had been pleased to make a moral universe to be governed by laws, there would be an end of all government if the breaking of those laws involved no penalty whatever. If, after the great King of all the earth had promulgated a law, with certain penalties annexed to the breach of it, He did not cause those penalties to be exacted, there would be an end to the whole system of His government! The foundations would be removed, and if the foundations are removed, what shall the righteous do? It is infinitely benevolent of God, I will venture to say, to cast evil men into hell; if that is thought to be a hard and strange statement, I reply that inasmuch as there is sin in the world, it is not benevolence for God to *tolerate* so great an evil, but it is the highest benevolence to do all that can be done to restrain the horrible pest. It would be far from benevolent for our government to throw wide the doors of all the jails, to abolish the office of the judge, to allow every thief and every offender of every kind to go unpunished! Instead of mercy it would be cruelty; it might be mercy to the offender, but it would be intolerable injustice towards the upright and inoffensive. God’s very benevolence demands that the detestable rebellion of sin against His supreme authority should be put down with a firm hand, and that men may not flatter themselves that they can do evil and yet go unpunished! The necessities of moral government require that sin must be punished; the effeminate and sentimental talkers of this boastful age represent God as though He had no attribute but that of gentleness, no virtue but that of indifference to evil, but the God of the Bible is glorious in holiness! He will by no means spare the guilty! At His bar every transgression is meted out its just recompense or reward. Even in the New Testament, where stands that golden sentence, “God is love,” His other attributes are by no means cast into the shade! Read the burning words of Peter, or James, or Jude, and see how the God of Sabaoth abhors evil! As the God who must do right, the Lord cannot shut His eyes to the iniquities of man; He must visit transgression with its punishment; He has done it, has done it terribly, and He will continue to do it! Even to all eternity He will show Himself the God who hates iniquity and sin. What, then, is to become of man? “All we like sheep have gone astray”; sin must be punished. What, then, can become of us? Infinite love has devised the expedient of representation and substitution. I call it an expedient, for we can only use the language of men. You remember brothers and sisters that you and I fell originally from our first estate by no act of our own—we, all of us, fell in the first Adam’s transgression. Now, had we fallen *individually* and *personally*, in the first place, apart from another, it may be that our fall would have been hopeless, like the fall of the apostate angels, who having sinned one by one, and not representatively, are reserved in chains of darkness forever under the condemnation and wrath of God; but inasmuch as the first fountain of evil came to us through our parent, Adam, there remained for God a loophole through which His divine love might enter without violation of justice. The principle of representation wrecked us, but the same principle of representation rescues us! Jesus Christ the Son of God becomes a man and re-heads the race, He becomes the second Adam, obeys the law of God, bears the penalty of sin, and now stands as the Head of all those who are in Him! And who are these but such as repent of sin, and put their trust in Him? These get out of the old headship of the first Adam where they fell, and through the atoning sacrifice are cleansed from all personal guilt, brought into union with the Second Adam, and stand again in Him, abiding forever in acceptance and felicity! See, then, how it is that God has been pleased to deliver His people. It has been through carrying out a principle with which the very system of the universe commenced, namely, that of *representation*. I repeat it, had we always

and altogether been separate units, there might have been no possibility of our salvation, but though every man sins separately, and the second clause of our text confesses that fact, yet we all sin in connection with others. For instance, who shall deny that each man receives propensities to sin from his parents, and that we transmit peculiarities of sin to our own children? We stand in connection with race, and there are sins of races peculiar to races and to nationalities; we are never put on a probation of entire separation, we always stand in connection with others, and God has availed Himself of this, which I called a loophole, to bring in salvation for us by virtue of our union with another man, who is also more than man—the Son of God, and yet the son of Mary; the Infinite who once became an infant; the Eternal who lived, and bled, and died as the representative of all who put their trust in Him.

Now you will say, perhaps, that still, albeit this might have been at the bottom of the whole system of moral government, you do not quite see the justice of it. The reply to that remark is this—if *God* sees the justice of it, you ought to be content with it. He was against whom every sin was aimed, and if He pleased to gather up the whole bundle of the sin of His people, and say to His beloved Son, “I will visit You for all these,” and if Jesus, our representative, joyously consented to bear our sins as our representative, who are you, and who am I that we should enter any caveat against what God the infinitely just One consents to accept? The text does not say that our sins were laid on Christ Jesus by *accident*, but, “the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” We sing sometimes, “I lay my sins on Jesus.” That is a very sweet act of faith, but at the bottom of it there is another laying, namely, that act in which it pleased the *Lord* to lay our sins on Jesus! Apart from the Lord’s doing it, our sins could never have been transferred to the Redeemer; the Lord is so just that we dare not think of examining His verdicts; He is so infinitely pure and holy that what He does we accept as being necessarily right, and inasmuch as we derive such blessed results from the divine plan of substitution, far be it from us to raise any question concerning it! Jesus was accepted as the natural substitute and representative of all those who trust Him, and all the sins of these were laid on Him so that they were freed from guilt. Jesus was regarded as if all these sins were His sins; He was punished as if these were His sins; He was put to shame, forsaken of God, and delivered to death as if He had been a sinner; and thus, through divine grace, those who actually committed the sins are permitted to go free; they have satisfied Justice through the sufferings of their substitute. Beloved brothers and sisters, the fittest person to be a substitute for us was Christ Jesus; and why: because He had been pleased to take us His people, into union with Himself. If He was our Head, and He had made us to be members of His body, who more fit to suffer for the body than the head? If He had, and Scripture tells us so, entered into a mysterious conjugal union with us, who more fit to suffer for the spouse than her Husband? Christ is man, therefore His fitness and adaptation to be a substitute for man. The creature that sins must be the creature who suffers; man breaks God’s law, and man must honor it. As by man came death, by man also must come the resurrection from the dead—and Jesus Christ was undoubtedly man of the substance of His mother. He was fit to be our substitute because He was a pure man. He had no offense in Him; neither Satan, nor the more searching eye of God could find any evil in Him; He was under no obligation to the law except as He put Himself under the law; He owed nothing to the great moral Governor until He voluntarily became a subject of His moral government on our behalf. Therefore, being without obligation Himself, having no debts of His own, He was fit to take upon Himself our liabilities; and as He was under no obligations for Himself, He was a fitting One to become under obligations for us. Moreover, He did all this voluntarily, and His fitness much lies here. If a substitute should be dragged to death for us unwillingly, if such could be the case, an injustice would be perpetrated in the very act. But Jesus Christ, taking up His cross, and going forth willingly to suffer for us, proved His fitness to redeem us. Once more, His being God as well as man, gave the strength to suffer, gave Him the power to stoop. If He had not been so lofty as to be fellow with the eternal God, He would not have stooped so low as to redeem us, but—

*“From the highest throne in glory
To the cross of deepest woe,”*

was such a descent that there was an infinite merit in it; when He stooped, even to the grave itself, there was an infinite merit by which justice was satisfied, the law was vindicated, and those for whom He died were effectually saved.

I do not want to proceed to the other point until everyone here has got the thought, and grasped it, and received it; we have gone astray, but the straying of as many of us as believe, were laid on Christ. We have each chosen our own way of sin, but those sins are not ours now—they are laid on our great substitute, if we are trusting in Him. He has paid to the utmost farthing all the debt of those sins; He has borne the fullness of divine wrath, and there is no wrath against *us*. Just as the bullock was laid on the altar to be burnt, God's wrath came like consuming fire and burnt the bullock, and there was no fire left. So when the wrath of God fell on Christ, it consumed Him, and there was no fire left, no wrath left—it spent itself. God has no anger against a soul that believes in Jesus, neither has that soul any sin, for its sin has been laid on Christ, and it cannot be in two places at once: Christ has carried it, and the sin has ceased to be—and the believing soul, though in itself as black as hell, is now as bright as Christ Himself when He was transfigured, for Christ has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in Everlasting righteousness. Thus we conclude our general exposition of the verse.

II. I now desire for a short time, but with all the earnestness of my soul, to dwell on THE SPECIAL DOCTRINE taught in the central clause of the text—"We have turned, every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Each man and each woman, from a natural difference of constitution, from the variations in education, and from the diversities of circumstances, has sinned somewhat differently from every other. Two brothers educated by the same parents will yet display diversities of transgression; no man treads exactly in the same footsteps as another, and some take roads which, though equally wrong, are diametrically opposite; one turns to the right hand, and another to the left, both equally renouncing the onward path. Now, the glory of the text that I want to bring out is this—that if you believe in Jesus Christ, this special sin of yours was laid on Him, as well as all those other sins in which you stand on an equality with your fellow men. There was a publican; he had been a common, gross offender, rough and harsh to his brother Jews in demanding an inordinate tax; he was a man of low habits, indulging in drunkenness, fornication, and other defilements; yet when that publican went up to the house of God and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," the atonement just met the publican's iniquity, and exactly took away the publican's transgression! But on the other hand, there was a Pharisee—the opposite of the publican; proud and self-righteous, not submitting himself to the righteousness of God. He considered himself to be in all things better than other men, but remember that when he fell off his horse as he was riding to Damascus, and heard a voice that said, "Why do you persecute Me?" that very same Pharisee said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." There was in Christ precisely that which met the Pharisee's sin! In our Lord's time there were Sadducees, too—that is, men who said there was neither angel nor spirit. They were infidels, skeptics, free-thinkers—your Broad Church sinners; now these men neither went into coarse transgression with the publican, nor into superstition with the Pharisee, but they had their direct antagonism to the truth of God, and I doubt not cases occurred to prove that in the pardoning blood of Christ the Sadducee's case was met. No matter in what peculiar direction any one of the Lord's sheep has gone astray, the Lord has laid that particular straying upon the Savior. I want to speak now so as to fetch forth some individuals here this morning. It may be that one here today is saying, "I sinned against an early Christian training; no one ever had a better mother or a more tender father. I knew the word of God, like Timothy, from my youth, but I did despite to all this teaching, and sinned with aggravation of infamy. I sinned against the clearest light of God." Brothers and sisters, your sin is very great, but the Lord has laid on Jesus your iniquity! Look to the cross, and see it laid there. "Yes," says another, "but I have had the strivings of God's Spirit; in addition to an early Christian education, I have sat under an earnest gospel ministry; I have often been impressed; I have been driven to my chamber to pray, but I have quenched the holy emotions, and have continued in sin." O guilty one, the Lord has laid on His dear Son your iniquity! Can you look to Jesus now, and trust Christ, "The Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world"? Then this offense of yours against the Holy Spirit is put away! "But," says another, "I am conscious of having had naturally a remarkable tenderness of spirit; from my early childhood I knew right from wrong, and when I sinned, it cost me much trouble to sin. I have had to wound my conscience before I could speak an ill word, or commit an evil action." Ah, my brother, that is a very condemning thing, to sin against a tender conscience. It is a great benefit, and in this age a very unusual benefit, to have much sensitiveness and delicacy of moral constitution, and if

you have violated it, it is certainly a great transgression. But though, “we have turned, every one to his own way, the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Let no despairing thought come upon you as though this sin were unpardonable! “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Look, now, by faith to Jesus, and you shall find that your sin is blotted out.

There may be one in this place who says, “Sir, I committed a sin under certain remarkable circumstances which I would not, could not, mention. But the remembrance of that one sin rankles in my soul at this hour; if I had not deliberately, and with malice aforethought, having not the fear of God before my eyes, chosen that sin, there might have been hope, but that sin, like a millstone, is about my neck, and will sink me forever and ever.” Look, soul! Can you see Christ on the cross? Will you now confide in Him? If so, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as snow! I know not what your sin may have been, but even if it were murder, if you would now trust the Son of God, your sin should vanish quite away from you, and you should be clean, clean every whit, before the all-seeing eyes of eternal justice. O that you would believe and this should be true to you! “No,” cries another, “but mine has been a *life* of peculiarly gross sin; I would not have my character unmasked before this congregation on any account.” Consider then, my friend, what it will be to have it published before a greater congregation, before the entire universe! “Ah,” you say, “I fear my condemnation is certain, for my transgressions have not been those of thought, merely, but of *act*. The members of my body have been the instruments of uncleanness.” Listen, I pray, “All manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven unto men.” There is no sin so black, save only one, but it may find forgiveness. Yes, and without exception, there is no sin that is possible to man, but what it shall be forgiven to any man who comes to Christ, and with simple trust, does cast himself on Him. Your extreme evil was laid on Christ; though you have turned unto your own way, yet this, too, was laid on Him!

Do I not hear, here and there in the congregation, hearts sighing out, “He has not struck my case yet! Mine has not been gross sin, but I have hardened my heart; I used to feel at one time I had great drawings towards the Lord Jesus, but I gave Him up! I have backslidden; I have from time to time rejected gospel invitations, until now, at last, the Lord has sworn in His wrath that I shall not enter into His rest! My transgressions have gone over my head like overflowing waters; I sink in them as in deep mire where there is no standing.” Yes, but soul, I must bring you back to the text! You have turned to your own way, but, if you believe, the Lord has laid on Jesus even *this* iniquity, also! If you will trust Him, your hardenings of heart shall now be forgiven you! You are not too late—the gate of mercy still stands wide open; if you trust in Jesus, this iniquity shall be blotted out! “Alas,” says another, “but I have been a hypocrite. I have come to the Lord’s Table, and yet I have never had an interest in Christ; I have been baptized, but yet I never had true faith.” Well, now, I will say this to end all matters—if you have perpetrated *all* the sins that ever were committed by men or devils; if you have defiled yourself with all the blackness that could be raked out of the lowermost kennels of hell; if you have spoken the most damnable blasphemies, and followed the most outrageous vices—yet Jesus Christ is an infinite Savior, and nothing can exceed the merit of His precious blood! “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Can you believe this? Can you do Christ the honor to believe this, and come and crouch at the feet that once were pierced? Ah, my hearers, you shall find mercy now, and you shall clap your hands and say, “He has blotted out my sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud my iniquities.”

I am afraid I do not convey to you the pleasure of my own soul in turning over this thought, but it has charmed me beyond measure. Here were Lot’s sins, scandalous sins; I cannot mention them; they were very different from David’s sins. Black sins, scarlet sins, were those of David, but David’s sins are not at all like those of Manasseh; the sins of Manasseh were not the same as those of Peter—Peter sinned in quite a different track. And the woman that was a sinner, you could not liken her to Peter; and if you look to *her* character, you could not set her side by side with Lydia. Nor if you think of Lydia, can you see her without discovering a great divergence between her and the Philippian jailer. They are all alike; they have all gone astray. But they are all different, they have turned, every one to *his own way*. But here is the blessed gathering up of them all! The Lord has made to meet on the Redeemer, as in a common focus, the iniquity of all these! And up yonder Magdalena’s song joins sweetly with that of the woman who was a sinner; and Lydia, chaste, but yet needing pardon, sings side by side with Bathsheba and Rahab, while David takes up the strain with Samson, and with Gideon, and these with Abraham and

with Isaac—all differently sinners—but the atonement meeting every case! We always think that man a quack who advertises a medicine as healing every disease, but when you come to the great gospel medicine—the precious blood of Jesus Christ, you have there in very deed what the old doctors used to call a catholicon, a universal medicine! It meets every case in its distinctness; it puts away sin in all its separateness of guilt as if it were made for that sin, and for that sin, alone.

III. My time has gone, and therefore I must close with this, A SPECIAL DUTY ARISING OUT OF THE SPECIAL DOCTRINE.

My dear brothers and sisters, if in my discourse I have at all described you, or if not having described you, I have yet from that very reason indicated you as an indescribable, look to Christ and find mercy! And then ever afterwards make it a rule with your soul that as you have been a special sinner, you will have special love and special gratitude, and do your Lord special service. Oh, if it takes 20 times the grace to save me than it does another, then I will render to my Savior 20 times the love, and 20 times the service! If I am an out-of-the-way straying sheep, peculiarly and specially black, defiled and disgraced; then if He loves me I will go upon this rule, that having had much forgiven, I will love much.

Brothers and sisters, I wish you did feel, I wish *I* did feel, more and more the peculiarity of the weight of our personal sin, for I am sure it is the way to drive us into manliness of Christian service. If you perform homage to Christ as one of a crowd, you do but little and that little badly. For eminent service you need to get away from the crowd, and serve the Lord *personally* by yourself, and as an individual! Get alone, I mean in a sense of obligation; separate yourself, as if you were a marked man, and must serve Jesus Christ in a marked way. The separation of pride is detestable, but individuality of service is admirable; those who stand steadily in the rank and file, do well, but those who step forward to lead the forlorn hope to do better. O for more Davids to come forth and say, “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?” O that the Christian church had more self-sacrificing men, like old Curtius, who, when there is a chasm to fill up, leaps into it and feels it an honor to be swallowed up for Christ’s sake, and the truth’s sake! O for many a Christian who, like the Roman hero, will hold his hand in the fire if necessary, and flinch not, feeling that all suffering were little to bear for the one who bled for us! We need more consecrated men! May God raise them up, and He will if you who feel your special sinnership find special mercy—and then render to God special returns.

It has struck me that we need more and more in the pulpit, and in the pew, individuality in our Christian experience and service. You see, we are all individuals in sinning; we have turned, every one to his own way, and yet many Christian people want to have their experience modeled after the example of someone else. They do not like to grow like God’s trees in the forest, with their gnarled roots and twisted boughs; they want to be clipped like Dutch trees into one uniform stiffness. Why, you lose the beauty of Christianity when you lose the individuality of Christians! In preaching and Sunday school teaching, and everything else, the tendency is to go too much to ill ruts and grooves. One might fancy that men and women were made by machinery, like pens at Birmingham, all of a sort, but we would have every man and woman in grace as individual as they were in sin; we need the originality of saintly life as well as of sinnership; it were well if a Christian would step out of the beaten track, and carry out his individuality, and be what God especially meant him to be. Brothers and sisters, there is a part of this world which can never get a blessing except through *you*! Christ has power over all flesh, and He has given His servants power over their little portions of that great mass. All the ministers that ever lived cannot bring to Christ those souls whom God has ordained that I shall be the means of turning to Christ, and neither I, nor my brothers, preach as we may, can bring to Christ the man whom God has ordained to save through yonder obscure village preacher who is now standing on a log on the village green, or holding forth in a wooden shed in the backwoods of America! There is a place for every man—and the way for every man to find that out is to be himself and nobody else; as he used to be himself when he was a sinner, so let him be himself now he has become a saint, and follow out, under God’s guidance, the movements of his own individualities, the singularities of his own nature! Do not think about smoothing your edges, and getting rid of the points God has made in you distinct from other men. It will never do! You lose of Christianity the very beauty and excellence if you do this! Your fine critics would have Rowland Hill preach like Thomas Chalmers—Rowland Hill must never utter a witticism in the pulpit, yet he could not be Rowland Hill if he did not! He must, therefore, be transformed into someone

else, for these superfine gentlemen will not allow that Rowland Hill as Rowland Hill can honor God! Wisdom will be of all her children; whether you speak with the learning of Apollos, or with the eloquence of a Paul, or with the blunt homeliness of a Cephas, the Lord will get to Himself honor, if you speak sincerely. And it is not for Paul to mimic Cephas, nor for Cephas to copy Apollos. As we have turned, every one to his own way, and our peculiar sin has been laid on Christ, so let each believer now, in his own way, under the direction of Christ, seek to serve his Lord and Master!

My great practical lesson from it is this: you are always seeing new inventions in the world; men are evermore bringing out some new system or scheme. We tunnel the earth, we split the clouds, we speak by lightning, we ride on the wings of the wind, but in the Christian church how few inventors we have! Robert Raikes invented the Sunday school. John Pounds invented Ragged Schools—have we come to the end of gracious ingenuity? Oh, if we loved Christ better, every man would invent something—he would have a mode of action growing out of his own peculiar capacities; he would feel that God meant to meet a case by him that would never be met by anybody else! Men are all alive about this world, and all asleep about the world to come; I would urge you each to have a mission, to espouse a work, to obtain a calling. Ask God not to put you into the Sunday school as a matter of mere providence, but as a matter of special ordination; and if you are ordained to be a Sunday school teacher, ask Him to put you into some particular class, not as by an accident, but as a special sphere for your special character and taste, and mode of thought, and manner of action. Follow, as God the Holy Spirit shall help you, the promptings of the divine life that God has put within you. And as you served Satan with all your individuality, even so serve Him upon whom the Lord of old did lay your iniquity. The Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 53.

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